

# A MAN IN CHRIST

THE VITAL ELEMENTS  
OF ST. PAUL'S RELIGION

BY

JAMES S. STEWART, M.A., B.D.

AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST"  
JOINT-EDITOR OF SCHLEIERMACHER'S "THE CHRISTIAN FAITH"



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feeling. That God in grace should have looked upon the sons of men at all was a thing to bring any man to his feet with shouts of joy: but that God should have looked upon *him*, the persecutor of God's cause, the man who more than any other had crucified God's Christ afresh, was a thing to bow him to the ground in amazed, adoring gratitude. It was this that took Paul and grappled him to Christ with fetters of deathless gratitude. Henceforth he was literally a bondsman of the evangel. For one thought now possessed him like a passion: to lead men everywhere to the source of all salvation and the fountain of living waters, to that stream in the Damascus desert of which his own soul had drunk, whose name was the grace of God and the everlasting mercy of Christ.

## CHAPTER IV

### MYSTICISM AND MORALITY

THE heart of Paul's religion is union with Christ. This, more than any other conception—more than justification, more than sanctification, more even than reconciliation—is the key which unlocks the secrets of his soul. Within the Holy of Holies which stood revealed when the veil was rent in twain from the top to the bottom on the day of Damascus, Paul beheld Christ summoning and welcoming him in infinite love into vital unity with Himself. If one seeks for the most characteristic sentences the apostle ever wrote, they will be found, not where he is refuting the legalists, or vindicating his apostleship, or meditating on eschatological hopes, or giving practical ethical guidance to the Church, but where his intense intimacy with Christ comes to expression. Everything that religion meant for Paul is focused for us in such great words as these: "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me."<sup>1</sup> "There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."<sup>2</sup> "He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit."<sup>3</sup>

#### I

The growing recognition of the fact that union with Christ is the centre of Paul's personal religion and of the Gospel he proclaims marks a definite and important advance in New Testament interpretation. There are

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 8<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 6<sup>17</sup>.

indeed those who, partly through the influence of a traditional Paulinism, and partly from a rooted dislike and distrust of anything to which the word "mystical" may be applied, still fail to give this cardinal reality the place that is its due. Protestant theology, throughout a great part of its history, has concentrated on the thought of justification. This it has regarded as more typically Pauline than anything else. To elucidate the circle of ideas associated with justification was all that was necessary, it held, to understand Paul. This was the first axiom with which generations of investigators went to work. Now no one who realizes the deep religious principles that are at stake in all the apostle's references to this matter will wish for a moment to set justification aside, or indeed to regard it as anything less than crucial for a true evangelicalism. All that we are here concerned to insist is that it was a one-sided development which made this idea central and saw in it the final clue to Paul's religion. Ritschl, taking a wider view, spoke of Christianity as "an ellipse with two foci": these were justification and the kingdom of God.<sup>1</sup> But the great Pauline phrase "in Christ" received too scant attention from the Ritschlian school; and perhaps J. K. Mozley was not going too far when he declared that "Ritschl is an entirely unreliable guide in any interpretation of a New Testament passage, which points in the direction of mystical union."<sup>2</sup> In Denney's view, "reconciliation" was the solving word. "Just because the experience of reconciliation," he wrote, "is the central and fundamental experience of the Christian religion, the doctrine of reconciliation is not so much one doctrine as the inspiration and focus

<sup>1</sup> *Justification and Reconciliation*, 11.

<sup>2</sup> *Ritschlianism*, 139.

of all. . . . In the experience of reconciliation to God through Christ is to be found the principle and the touchstone of all genuine Christian doctrine."<sup>1</sup> Denney's work has put all students of Paul deeply in his debt; but here again the criticism may legitimately be urged that the conception of union with Christ occupies something less than the quite decisive place in which Paul sets it. It is at this point, too, that the Barthian theology has left itself most open to attack. Sentimental mysticism Barth cannot endure: it is the apotheosis of all that is most misguided in religion. But there is a mysticism that is not sentimental, and this school is in real danger of rejecting the true with the false. In his treatment of Paul's great doctrines of the indwelling Spirit and the fellowship of believers with Christ, Barth has nothing at all comparable to his own noble discussion of such themes as the righteousness of God. If the awe of a human soul lying prostrate at the feet of God, "the wholly Other," is essential to religion, the joy of the soul which is taken into fullest and most intimate communion with God in Christ is no less religious; and the Barthians, who have served their generation so well in the emphasis they have laid on the former, will not be able to escape the charge of onesidedness until they make room for the latter. Without a doubt, the great words of Faber's familiar hymn will always awaken a responsive echo in the truly religious soul:

"O how I fear Thee, living God,  
With deepest, tenderest fears,  
And worship Thee with trembling hope  
And penitential tears!"

But that, as Faber saw and as some of the present-day

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 6 f.

interpreters of Christianity have failed to see, is not the whole of religion. What Paul once described as "the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ"<sup>1</sup> is known only to the soul which has made the further discovery:

"Yet I may love Thee too, O Lord,  
Almighty as Thou art,  
For Thou hast stooped to ask of me  
The love of my poor heart."

That is what union with Jesus Christ means; and until we realize the central place which this always held in Paul's thought and experience, many of the richest treasures of his Gospel must remain sealed from our sight.

On the whole, however, the tendency of Pauline study in recent years has been to give increased attention to this most vital element of the apostle's religion. As illustrating the growing consensus of opinion, the following verdicts may be cited. "Just as the thought of life," declares Titius, "is the decisive one for religion, as over against that of righteousness; and as the resurrection thought, in consequence, takes precedence of that of judgment in delineating the way of salvation; so the idea of the spiritual life in Christ takes precedence of the thought of justification."<sup>2</sup> "This personal union with Christ," says Garvie, "is the constant dominating factor in the religious experience and moral character of Paul."<sup>3</sup> Deissmann, who has always been a protagonist of this point of view, holds that "the various Pauline testimonies about salvation are refractions of

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Paulinismus unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Seligkeit*, 270.

<sup>3</sup> Art. *Paul's Personal Religion*, in *Expository Times*, March 1925, 252.

the one single ray, the faith of Christ. . . . As a matter of fact, the religion of Paul is something quite simple. It is communion with Christ."<sup>1</sup> Dean Inge is equally emphatic. "This intimate relationship with the Spirit-Christ is unquestionably the core of his religion. . . . The critic of St. Paul must give full weight to the constantly repeated words '*in Christ*.' The mystical Christ could do what the idea of a Messiah could never have done. This conception, developed in the Fourth Gospel, has been the life-blood of Christianity ever since."<sup>2</sup> "Christ-faith," says J. Weiss, "Christ-piety, Christ-worship, Christ-mysticism—this is the one focus of Paul's religion; this is the special form in which he experienced Christianity."<sup>3</sup> Professor H. A. A. Kennedy's verdict is a notable one. "This supremely intimate relation of union with Christ constitutes for Paul the pre-supposition of everything that counts in salvation."<sup>4</sup> "Union with Christ," according to Professor H. R. Mackintosh, "is a brief name for all that the apostles mean by salvation. For St. Paul and St. John oneness with Christ is to be redeemed, and to be redeemed is oneness with Christ . . . the classical Christian experience, not a peripheral eccentricity."<sup>5</sup> Schweitzer's recent book *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, while marked by the same rather exaggerated eschatological bias which characterized his earlier work, has this great merit, that it fixes on the experience of union with Christ as the very core of Christianity. And Professor C. E. Raven's conclusion about Paul is that "his whole many-sided philosophy is based upon the

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, 207, 223.

<sup>2</sup> *Christian Ethics and Modern Problems*, 73.

<sup>3</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, 341.

<sup>4</sup> *The Theology of the Epistles*, 124.

<sup>5</sup> *The Person of Jesus Christ*, 334.

belief that such personal union achieved by faith and consummated in love is the essence of religion. . . . Life 'in Christ' is not peculiar to St. Paul and is indeed the essential and creative element in Christianity."<sup>1</sup>

Further evidence of the same kind could be quoted ; but these passages will serve to illustrate what has been one of the most important and hopeful trends in Pauline study in recent years.<sup>2</sup> If it be now asked, *Why* is it so vital to keep the conception of union with Christ in the centre ? the answer is clear. For one thing, to assign to this fact any place other than the centre is to endanger the whole doctrine of atonement. The redemption achieved by Christ becomes something that operates mechanically or almost magically : it is altogether outside of us, independent of our attitude. Gore was not speaking too strongly when he declared that the tendency to isolate the thought "Christ for us" from the other thought "Christ in us" has been historically "an abundant source of scandal."<sup>3</sup> It is certain that such an idea as justification, for instance, can only be gravely misleading, when it is not seen in the light of a union with Christ in which the sinner identifies himself with Christ in His attitude to sin. Similarly, the thought of sanctification, dissociated from union, loses all reality. It is left, as it were, hanging in the air. It becomes an "extra." It is not organically related to the rest of redemption. Only when union with Christ is

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus and the Gospel of Love*, 296, 301.

<sup>2</sup> A Roman Catholic testimony may be added here : "the fundamental idea of the Church" is "the idea of the incorporation of the faithful in Christ" (Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 22).

<sup>3</sup> *Belief in Christ*, 299. Cf. E. Brunner, *The Mediator*, 528 : "That which is expressed outwardly and that which is spoken within the heart, the Christ for us and the Christ in us, are one and the same God."

kept central is sanctification seen in its true nature, as the unfolding of Christ's own character within the believer's life ; and only then can the essential relationship between religion and ethics be understood. In short, the whole meaning of the atonement is here at stake.

Of all this Paul was well aware. There is one very important passage which summarizes his general thought about it, and also shows in particular how definitely union with Christ held precedence over all the other conceptions with which his mind worked. The passage is this : "But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life."<sup>1</sup> Here by the use twice over of the *a fortiori* argument, Paul declares his conviction that in Christianity the final stress must ever fall on one thing, and on one thing only, union with Christ, life in fellowship with Christ. It should be noted, moreover, that in many of the passages where justification is the theme (though not indeed in all) there can be felt the influence of the Judaistic controversy—another fact which would warrant us in regarding such passages as being at least one degree further from the centre of things than those in which, with all thoughts of controversy stilled, his own most intimate Christ-experience speaks.<sup>2</sup> It is perhaps also a point worthy of remark that, while justification and reconciliation un-

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 5<sup>8-10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The influence of controversy must not, however, be exaggerated. See p. 244.

doubtedly look forward and contain in germ all the harvest of the Spirit that is to come, yet—by the very nature of the terms themselves—they carry with them, and can never quite shake off, a memory of the old life left behind; their positive implies a negative; they speak of a transition, a break, an end and a beginning; and their brightness has a dark background to set it off. Union with Christ, on the other hand, means the steady, unbroken glory of a quality of life which shines by its own light, because it is essentially supernatural; allows no hint of any negative, because “the fullness of God” is in it; and knows no before and after, because it is already eternal.

We turn now to the brief but most important phrase in which Paul’s intimacy with the risen Lord finds expression, the phrase “*in Christ*.” So frequent and even commonplace has this phrase become in latter-day Christian usage that it is quite possible to miss its significance and fail to realize just how striking it is. It is worth reminding ourselves that no such words have ever been used, or indeed could ever be used, of any of the sons of men: we do not speak of being *in* St. Francis, or *in* John Wesley. The fact is that when we speak of being “*in Christ*” we are consciously or unconsciously making a confession of faith; we are framing a Christology; if we are saying something about ourselves, we are saying something far more tremendous about Jesus. We are declaring that Jesus is no mere fact in history, no towering personality of the past, but a living, present Spirit, whose nature is the very nature of God. So far-reaching is this favourite apostolic phrase.

It was a dictum of Luther’s that all religion lies in

the pronouns; and that there is a real truth in this, everyone who can speak with Paul of “the Son of God, who loved *me*, and gave Himself for *me*,”<sup>1</sup> must realize. But Deissmann, going a step further than Luther, has virtually declared that religion resides in the prepositions, and in one of them in particular. The publication in 1892 of *Die neutestamentliche Formel “in Christo Jesu”* heralded the dawn of a new era in Pauline study. Starting from the fact that “*in Christ*” (or some cognate expression, such as “*in the Lord*,” “*in Him*,” etc.) occurs 164 times in Paul, but never in the Synoptics, Deissmann carried out a thorough examination of the use of *ἐν* with a personal dative in Greek literature in general and in the Septuagint in particular, and came to the conclusion that Paul “was the originator of the formula, not indeed as being the first to employ *ἐν* with a personal singular, but in the sense that he used an already existing idiom to create a new technical term”<sup>2</sup> of religion. It is an instance of the way in which the creative power of the Christian experience makes itself felt even in the domain of language. New wine requires new bottles; and traditional thought-forms are often poor vehicles of expression for a man who has had his Damascus day. Where the Synoptics speak of the disciples’ fellowship with Jesus, the preposition they use is *μετά*, never *ἐν*. Paul, on the other hand, uses *ἐν* constantly, *μετά* never. Take the long, typically Pauline sentence at the opening of the epistle to the Ephesians: within that single sentence “*in Christ*” (or some derivative) occurs a dozen times. It is indeed the most characteristic phrase in the apostle’s terminology.

Is Deissmann correct in regarding Paul as its originator? It is a point on which it would be unwise to be

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Die neutestamentliche Formel*, 70.

dogmatic. The phrase is certainly absent from the Synoptics, but it is at least possible that the idea comes from Jesus Himself. Is there not a hint of it, for example, in the great promise, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them"?<sup>1</sup> And while we cannot enter here into a discussion of the historic basis of the Johannine discourses, it seems probable that the parable of the vine and the branches, with its reiterated emphasis "Abide in Me, and I in you,"<sup>2</sup> represents a definite element in our Lord's teaching. But there can be little doubt that it was Paul who made the phrase regulative for Christian thought and experience: thus far at least, Deissmann's position commands our assent.

Now the obvious clue to an understanding of this whole circle of ideas lies in the cognate phrase "*in the Spirit*." Paul's thought of the living Christ is so closely bound up with his thought of the Holy Spirit that he seems on occasion to use the two names almost interchangeably. To say this is not to agree with Weiss when he declares that Christ and the Spirit are simply identified.<sup>3</sup> The New Testament doctrine is that it is the Spirit who makes Christ real to us and mediates Christ's gifts to us: and this is not "identity." Still, so close are the ideas of Christ and the Spirit in Paul's mind that he can pass almost without any sense of distinction from the one to the other. It is, therefore, natural and legitimate to use the phrase "*in the Spirit*" to elucidate the harder phrase "*in Christ*." Let us take, for example, the statement: "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you."<sup>4</sup> There the idea "*in the Spirit*" and its

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 18<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, 356.

<sup>2</sup> John 15<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8<sup>9</sup>.

reverse "the Spirit in you" are brought together in a most illuminating way. Plainly, Paul thinks of the Christian as living and moving and having his being in a *πνεῦμα* element which is the very breath of life. Just as it might be said that the human body is in the atmosphere which surrounds it on every side, and yet that atmosphere is also within it, filling it and vitalizing it, so it may be said of the Christian soul that it both exists in the Spirit and has the Spirit within it. Here, then, is the key to the phrase "*in Christ*." Christ is the redeemed man's new environment. He has been lifted out of the cramping restrictions of his earthly lot into a totally different sphere, the sphere of Christ. He has been transplanted into a new soil and a new climate, and both soil and climate are Christ. His spirit is breathing a nobler element. He is moving on a loftier plane. As Principal W. M. Macgregor has well expressed it, "Just as a bird lives in the air and needs the air to live in, just as a fish lives in the water and can live nowhere else, so, in Paul's view, a Christian man requires the presence of his Master; and if that is withdrawn, he must speedily die."<sup>1</sup> He lives, as Deissmann puts it vividly, "*innerhalb des Christus*."<sup>2</sup> Or, in Paul's own succinct confession, "Life means Christ to me."<sup>3</sup>

The question may, however, be raised—Is the full mystical meaning present in *every* occurrence of the phrase in Paul's epistles? Probably not. This is Deissmann's mistake. Having made his discovery, he is inclined to apply it everywhere without exception. He forces his key into every lock. He gives to certain passages a weight more than the words can really

<sup>1</sup> *Repentance unto Life*, 231.

<sup>2</sup> *Die neutestamentliche Formel*, 84.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 1<sup>21</sup> (Moffatt).



bear.<sup>1</sup> It is possible, for instance, that sometimes *ἐν* has the sense of *διὰ*, and the translation "through Christ" would best convey the meaning. It is more than likely, too, that occasionally "in Christ" is simply synonymous with "Christian." At the time when Paul was writing, "Christian" was still a term of reproach, and was therefore not in the vocabulary of the Church; and the apostle may well have fallen back on his favourite phrase where we to-day should use the single word.<sup>2</sup>

But if it is a mistake to read the full mystical significance into all the passages where "in Christ" occurs, it is a far greater mistake to whittle down the phrase until it carries no such significance at all. In his main contention, Deissmann is perfectly right. The words have what may almost be called a local meaning. With wonderful vividness they convey something akin to, but even deeper and more intimate than, the truth contained in the Psalmist's cry, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations,"<sup>3</sup> or in Wordsworth's great expression "God who is our home."<sup>4</sup> And unless we realize this fact, and give it its due, we are sure to miss Paul's meaning again and again. Take a case in point. The Authorized Version, in a famous passage, reads "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."<sup>5</sup> The Revised Version is practically the same. On the face of it, that means simply, "Let Jesus' attitude be yours"; and this is how the words have frequently been understood. "Reflect in your own

<sup>1</sup> See Titius, *Der Paulinismus*, 260; Weiss, *Das Urchristentum*, 360; Morgan, *The Religion and Theology of Paul*, 118; Wernle, *Jesus und Paulus*, 69 f. But Wernle's criticism goes much too far.

<sup>2</sup> Philemon<sup>16</sup>, "both in the flesh and in the Lord," is translated by Moffatt "as a man and as a Christian."

<sup>3</sup> Psalm 90<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> *Intimations of Immortality*.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. 2<sup>5</sup>.

minds the mind of Christ Jesus," is Lightfoot's rendering.<sup>1</sup> To obtain this meaning, however, involves straining the Greek, and supplying a most unlikely verb in the relative clause. But now, all that is needed, not only to overcome the linguistic difficulty, but also to discover a far richer and more pointed challenge in the words, is to interpret the phrase "in Christ Jesus" in its strict Pauline sense. The meaning which then emerges is this: "See that you apply among yourselves, in your community life, the spirit which has been born within you by union with Christ."<sup>2</sup> Clearly, what Paul is hinting at is the danger—as common to-day as it was then—of a hiatus between personal religion and public relationships. He reminds the Philippians that their own experience "in Christ" must be the controlling and directing factor in all their treatment of one another. Very similar is the passage, later in the same epistle, where he begs Euodia and Syntyche to "be of the same mind in the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Here again, "in the Lord" must be given full weight. It is as though he said to those two Christians who had unhappily become estranged, "Remember your common union with Christ. Remember that it is not in two different spheres that your spirits are living; the two spheres coincide, there is but one, and it is Christ. Realize this and act on it, and your present differences will vanish. *In the Lord* you will agree." These passages illustrate the important

<sup>1</sup> *Philippians*, 110.

<sup>2</sup> The verse reads—τοῦτο γὰρ φρονεῖσθω ἐν ὑμῖν ὃ καὶ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. In supplying a verb for the relative clause, some form of the verb in the principal clause is more natural than A.V. "was," and φρονεῖν is more natural than ἐφρονεῖτο. In this case, the natural reading is the correct one. The point to notice is that it has been the failure to give the words "in Christ" their strict meaning and full value which has been responsible for the confusion.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 4<sup>2</sup>.



fact that very often Paul's real meaning will yield itself up only when we refuse in any way to thin down or reduce his great watchword "in Christ." For always, to Paul, it was this conception that struck the keynote of religion, and echoed the deepest experience of his soul.

## II

In the foregoing discussion, we have had occasion more than once to use the word "mysticism"; and it is necessary to grasp quite clearly what this term means, as applied to Paul's religious experience. Efforts are periodically made to banish this conception altogether. But it is hard to destroy; it has a way of reasserting itself, and coming back into its own. Indeed, the stubborn survival-power of this term, in face of trenchant criticism and attack, suggests that it stands for something quite indispensable and essential in religion. A hundred years ago, Schleiermacher declared that an idea so vague was better avoided;<sup>1</sup> and with this many to-day are disposed to agree. They imagine that mysticism represents something so shadowy and ill-defined and non-intellectual that to use the term is simply to "darken counsel by words without knowledge." Others go further, and proclaim a personal aversion to the mystic and all his works. He is accused of a selfish absorption in his own individual experience. He is regarded as culpably negligent of religion's roots in history. He is criticized for an alleged indifference to moral judgments. It is even suggested that he has not escaped the deadly sin of the superior person.

Behind all this there lies a serious confusion of thought. The type of character which seeks religious

<sup>1</sup> *The Christian Faith*, 429.

emotions and ecstasies for their own sake, which dissolves history in speculation and is defective in respect of moral duty, is unfortunately not unknown: the pity is that to religion of this kind the noble name of mysticism should ever have been applied. Linguistically, we are not so well equipped here as are the Germans: for where they have two words, *Mystik* and *Mysticismus* (the former standing for the true religious attitude, the latter for its debased and spurious imitation), we have to make the one do duty.<sup>1</sup> But the confusion goes deeper than that. It is not only a case of distinguishing between what is genuine and what is forged. We have to realize that there are important differences even within the range of what may properly be called mystical experience. A very striking illustration of this lies to our hand in one of Paul's epistles.<sup>2</sup> Writing to the Corinthians, he relates an extraordinary event which had happened in his own spiritual life. He was caught up to the third heaven. He was given the beatific vision. He had a direct experience of the presence of God. He heard divine secrets which no man was at liberty to repeat. Now the precision with which he dates this event is highly significant. It happened fourteen years before this particular letter was written. That is to say, even in the apostle's own career, it was quite exceptional. This was not the level on which he habitually lived. The rapture and ecstasy came—and passed. The trance marked an epoch in his life. That glorious experience of the open heavens, of

"God's presence, and His very self  
And essence all-divine,"

<sup>1</sup> Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, 194.

<sup>2</sup> II Cor. 12<sup>1</sup> ff.

meant to Paul something akin to what Bethel meant to Jacob. Undoubtedly this was one aspect of the apostle's mysticism. *But only one.* And Paul himself—this is the point to be emphasized—would have been the first to recognize and to insist that such experiences form only a comparatively small part of the soul's deep communion with God in Christ. His whole teaching about special gifts of the Spirit, their value and their limitations, makes it perfectly clear that, while attaching great importance to these unique "visions and revelations" and glorifying God for them, he would never dream of using them to disparage the more normal experiences of souls "hid with Christ in God."<sup>1</sup> On the contrary, it was in the daily, ever-renewed communion, rather than in the transient rapture, that the inmost nature of Christianity lay. This was the true mysticism. This was essential religion. This was eternal life.

In some degree, then, *every real Christian is a mystic in the Pauline sense.*<sup>2</sup> It is here that Paul differs very notably from his great contemporary Philo. For Philo as for Paul, a direct apprehension of the eternal was the goal of religion. But this union with God was the reward only of a privileged minority. Outside the comparatively small circle of elect, initiated souls, the crowning experience remained unknown. And even the few who were taken into inmost fellowship with God had but broken glimpses of the glory: God was an intermittent, not an abiding, presence. This was the Philonic mysticism—noble so far as it

<sup>1</sup> Col. 3<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> W. R. Inge, *Vale*, 38: "In truth the typical mystical experience is just prayer. Anyone who has really prayed, and felt that his prayers are heard, knows what mysticism means."

went, but too esoteric to be a Gospel, far too restricted and aloof to be good news for a perishing world. What Paul by the grace of God discovered was that the glorious experience was waiting for any soul which gave itself in faith to Christ. Not only so: such union with the divine, he knew, need be no transient splendour, flashing for a moment across life's greyness and then gone; it could be the steady radiance of a light unsetting, filling the commonest ways of earth with a gladness that was new every morning. Unhealthy reactions such union never could engender. The crushing sense of world-weariness which has marked too many types of mysticism, the contempt of life, the absorption in unproductive emotion, were foreign to it altogether. Its effect, as the apostle saw and as his own career in Christ convincingly proved, would be the very opposite. It would make men not less efficient for life, but more so. It would vitalize them, not only morally and spiritually, but even physically and mentally. It would give them a verve, a creativeness, an exhilaration, which no other experience in the world could impart. It would key life up to a new pitch of zest and gladness and power. This is Pauline mysticism; and great multitudes who have never used the name have known the experience, and have found it life indeed.

Mention should here be made of a fruitful distinction which Deissmann has drawn between two types of mysticism, which he calls respectively "acting" and "reacting." "The one type"—the reacting—"is everywhere present where the mystic regards his communion with God as an experience in which the action of God upon him produces a reaction towards God. The other type of mysticism"—the acting—"is that

in which the mystic regards his communion with God as his own action, from which a reaction follows on the part of Deity."<sup>1</sup> Much religion has been of the latter kind. Man's action has been regarded as the primary thing. The soul has endeavoured to ascend towards God. Spiritual exercises have been made the ladder for the ascent. But all this savours of the religion of works as contrasted with the religion of grace. Paul's attitude was different. His mysticism was essentially of the reacting kind. Christ, not Paul, held the initiative. Union with the eternal was not a human achievement: it was the gift of God. It came, not by any spiritual exercises, but by God's self-revelation, God's self-impartment. The words "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me,"<sup>2</sup> which remind us that the Damascus experience itself was the foundation of the apostle's mysticism, are Paul's emphatic way of saying that God's action always holds the priority: His servant simply reacts to the action of God. Here, as everywhere in Paul, all is of grace; and it is well to be thus reminded by the apostle that union with Christ is not something we have to achieve by effort, but something we have to accept by faith.

From what has now been said, it will be apparent why we cannot agree with the proposal to drop the term "*mystical*" union, and speak simply of a "*moral*" union. There is, of course, no such thing as a union with Christ which does not have the most far-reaching effects in the moral sphere. The man who comes to be "in Christ" has found the supreme ethical dynamic. But just as religion is something

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, 195.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 1:16 f.

more than a mere device for reinforcing conduct,<sup>1</sup> so union with Christ as Paul experienced it has more in it than can be described by the one word "moral." In this respect, it is like love. Love between human beings is morally creative. It is a master-force for character. It lets loose amazing energies for goodness. Superb ethical achievements are at its command. But no one imagines that to describe it thus is to say all that may be said. Love is moral *plus*, as it were: there is in it a whole range of glory and surprise which the single term cannot really convey. So with that divine union in which Paul's religion centres: it is ethical through and through, never for a moment is it anything but ethical; and yet it is in simple justice to the facts that we press beyond the idea of a moral to that of a mystical union. Only so can we adequately depict the true inwardness and intimacy of this union, and the abiding wonder of those gifts—so lavish and undeserved and gracious and rich in beauty—which it brings with it from the side of God to man.

The analogy just used—that of the love of one person for another—lets in a flood of light on the whole matter of union with Christ. The notion which certain philosophies have almost taken for granted, that human personalities are mutually exclusive and impermeable, is disproved when the experience of love is taken into account. "Separateness" is not, in point of fact, the final truth about living souls. When we say of those to whom the gloriously enriching gift of love has come that they are "bound up" in each other, we are not indulging in empty metaphor: we are giving a strictly accurate description of what happens to their souls. Walls of partition go down, and self merges in self. Nor

<sup>1</sup> On this, see Oman, *Grace and Personality*, 107.

is the resultant union a lower state of being than the rigid separation of the self-sufficient soul: on the contrary, it is definitely higher. Now it is this potential permeation of one personality by another which makes spiritual religion possible. It is this that promotes the mystical union. But seeing that personality as it is in Christ has far greater resources, both of self-impartation and of receptiveness, than it has anywhere on the purely human level, it follows that there can exist between Christians and their Lord a degree of intimacy and unity absolutely unparalleled and unique. Hence the analogy, illuminating as it is, can never be more than an analogy; and we might indeed go the length of saying that the union of believing souls with Christ is as far beyond any merely human union as the union of the three Persons in the Godhead is beyond them both.

We must guard, however, against conveying the impression that such union implies virtual absorption of a pantheistic kind. Nothing was further from Paul's thoughts. Here again his doctrine runs along a different line from that of Philo. "When the divine light blazes forth," said Philo, "the human light sets; and when the former sets, the latter rises. The reason within us leaves its abode at the arrival of the divine Spirit, but when the Spirit departs the reason returns to its place."<sup>1</sup> This suggests that what the divine immanence does is to impair or even destroy the distinctness of the human personality. But there is certainly no hint of any such idea in Paul. He never thought of Christ as overriding any man's individuality. Union with Christ, so far from obliterating the believer's personal qualities and characteristics, throws these into greater relief. How far any thought of absorption was from the apostle's

<sup>1</sup> *Quis Rerum Divinarum Heres sit*, 249.

mind is evidenced by such statements as these: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."<sup>1</sup> The passage which, on a superficial view, comes nearest proclaiming the end of all personal identity—"I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"—is followed immediately by the significant words, "the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God,"<sup>2</sup> in which, as Weiss has pointed out, Paul deliberately guards against the possible pantheistic interpretation by reasserting the religious attitude where "Thou" and "I" stand over against each other.<sup>3</sup> Clearly Paul's view is that the man whom Christ begins to possess does not thereby cease to be himself. On the contrary, like the younger son in Jesus' story, he then for the first time really "comes to himself."<sup>4</sup> Christian experience does not depersonalize men and reduce them to a monotonous uniformity: it heightens every individual power they have. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations; but it is the same God which worketh all in all."<sup>5</sup> More convincing than anything Paul ever said about this is the evidence of his own life. Study the record of that amazing career, mark the impact which this God-filled and Christ-mastered soul made upon the life of men and Churches and nations, and then declare if he was lacking in individuality! No, it was anything but a blurring and obliterating of personality that resulted from the Damascus experience. Every quality of heart and brain

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8<sup>14, 16</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Weiss, *Das Urchristentum*, 361: "ganz im Geiste der Ich-und-Du-Religion."

<sup>4</sup> Luke 15<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> I Cor. 12<sup>4 ff.</sup>

and soul which the man possessed was lifted into sudden, new distinctness and vigour. This was what union with Christ meant to Paul, and what he believed it could mean to all the world.

Here it may be well to point out that Paul's mysticism, as we have now described it, constitutes *a very decisive challenge to that type of modern religion which is content to regard Jesus merely as example*. Writers like Harnack have offered the world a picture in which Jesus appears primarily as the ethical teacher, whose significance for humanity lies in the nobility of His prophetic utterances, and in the pattern of His sacrificial life and obedience unto death.<sup>1</sup> Now it is perfectly true that the noble ethic Jesus preached, and His own fulfilment of it in life and deed, have laid down the lines for all His friends to follow. Nor can there be any doubt that this was a real part of the divine plan by which the Word became flesh and dwelt among us—as indeed the New Testament apostle recognized who wrote, "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."<sup>2</sup> But what Paul's mysticism does is to remind us that the example of Christ is only a part, and not even the greatest part, of the redeeming Gospel. Were there no more than this, the contemplation of the perfect holiness of Jesus could only breed despair. No shining example, cold and remote as the stars, can cleanse the conscience that has been defiled, or break the octopus grip which sin gets upon the soul. The evangel of an ethical example is a devastating thing. It makes religion the most grievous of burdens. Perhaps this is the real reason why, even among professing Christians, there are so many strained faces and weary

<sup>1</sup> Harnack's *What is Christianity?* may be taken as typical of this school of thought.

<sup>2</sup> I Peter 2<sup>21</sup>.

hearts and captive, unreleased spirits. They have listened to Jesus' teaching, they have meditated on Jesus' character; and then they have risen up, and tried to drive their own lives along Jesus' royal way. Disappointment heaped on bitter disappointment has been the result. The great example has been a dead-weight beating them down, bearing them to the ground, bowing their hopeless souls in the dust. If Harnack's Christ is all, we are left without a Redeemer. But ever since Isaiah,<sup>1</sup> men have been aware that one of the vital distinctions between true religion and false is that, whereas the latter is a dead burden for the soul to carry, the former is a living power to carry the soul. Now Paul's mysticism grows lyrical with precisely this great discovery. "Christ in me" means something quite different from the weight of an impossible ideal, something far more glorious than the oppression of a pattern for ever beyond all imitation. "Christ in me" means Christ bearing me along from within, Christ the motive-power that carries me on, Christ giving my whole life a wonderful poise and lift, and turning every burden into wings. All this is in it when the apostle speaks of "Christ in you, the hope of glory."<sup>2</sup> Compared with this, the religion which bases everything on example is pitifully rudimentary. This, and this alone, is the true Christian religion. Call it mysticism or not—the name matters little: the thing, the experience, matters everything. To be "in Christ," to have Christ within, to realise your creed not as something you have to bear but as something by which you are borne, this is Christianity. It is more: it is release and liberty, life with an endless song at its heart. It means feeling within you, as long as life here lasts, the carrying power of Love

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 46<sup>1-4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 1<sup>27</sup>.

Almighty ; and underneath you, when you come to die, the touch of everlasting arms.

One other question presents itself before we leave this part of our inquiry. *Is this union with Christ, which Paul makes central, something different from union with God?* Not infrequently the opinion has been expressed that the apostle, in the fervour of his passion for Christ, has given to the Son a place that ought to belong to the Father alone. His Christ-enthusiasm is so great, it is said, that God retreats into the background. The particular mode in which he experienced redemption has tended to give him a false perspective and to throw his personal religion out of focus. Religion's goal must ever be, as the Westminster divines declared, "to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever." But Paul would have answered the Catechism differently : he would have said "to glorify and to enjoy *Christ*."

This criticism, however, is quite beside the mark. Union with Christ, as Paul conceives it, is union with God. He knows nothing of a mysticism which stops short of faith's final goal. Behind every expression of his intense intimacy with Jesus stands the great ultimate fact of God Himself. Indeed, as we have already seen,<sup>1</sup> the nature which can impart itself to believing souls in the way in which, by the plain testimony of experience, Christ's nature can and does impart itself, proves itself *ipso facto* to be divine. Hence the more any man comes to be "in Christ," the more is he "in God." There are not two experiences, but one.

Abundant evidence in support of this position can be found in the epistles. Everything in Paul's Gospel, even where his adoring gratitude to Christ seems to

<sup>1</sup> See p. 154.

banish every other thought, runs back to God, the beginning of salvation and its end. How could God be forgotten, when Christ Himself had been God's gift? "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son."<sup>1</sup> Behind the figure of the crucified Son, Paul always sees God the Father ; and behind the love that bled and died, the love that reigned in the heart of the eternal. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that . . . *Christ* died."<sup>2</sup> "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?"<sup>4</sup> So, too, with Christ's risen life. For Paul, to think of that was to think of God : to be united with the risen Christ was to be united with the God who raised Him.<sup>5</sup> The impossibility of distinguishing two types of union is proved by such a statement as : "Ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."<sup>6</sup> At the heart of Paul's fellowship with Christ lay the triumphant certainty—"God was in Christ :"<sup>7</sup> so that he could have said "Amen" to John's great declaration, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> There was no hiatus, as though fellowship with Christ were merely a stage on the road to fellowship with God : they formed one indivisible experience. In one of the most deeply mystical passages in the epistles, Paul speaks about being "hid with Christ"; but here, what was always implicit in his mysticism is made explicit, when he writes

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 4<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8<sup>32</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> II Cor. 5<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 5<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 8<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> I John 1<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. 5<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Col. 2<sup>12</sup>.



"hid with Christ *in God*."<sup>1</sup> He recognizes that for himself there would have been no fellowship with Christ at all, had it not been for God's grace in electing him to this glorious privilege: "It pleased God to reveal His Son in me."<sup>2</sup> The indwelling Christ works in the Church: yet the apostle writes to the Philippians, "It is God which worketh in you."<sup>3</sup> Christianity's aim in the world is "that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord," but this confession is "to the glory of God the Father."<sup>4</sup> In the same breath in which Paul announces that "the head of every man is Christ," he also declares that "the head of Christ is God."<sup>5</sup> There is also the great passage which looks forward to the consummation: "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all."<sup>6</sup>

Further evidence is unnecessary: enough has been said to show how totally unfounded is the idea that the apostle's Christ-passion resulted in a loss of perspective in his religion. It is not true that God is thrust into the background. God is everywhere. He is in every thought of Paul's heart, and in every Christward motion of Paul's will. When the apostle speaks of being "in Christ," of having "Christ in me," it is nothing other than union with God that he is experiencing. The title "Christocentric" justly describes his religion; but no mistake could be greater than to suppose that this rules "Theocentric" out. Paul's Christianity was both. Nor will this occasion difficulty

<sup>1</sup> Col. 3<sup>3</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Gal. 1<sup>25</sup> f.<sup>3</sup> Phil. 2<sup>13</sup>.<sup>4</sup> Phil. 2<sup>11</sup>.<sup>5</sup> I Cor. 11<sup>3</sup>.<sup>6</sup> I Cor. 15<sup>24-28</sup>.

to any save to those who have had no experience of being apprehended by Christ. All whom Christ has truly possessed have known beyond a doubt that it was God who was possessing them. They have known that their Christ-experience was not a mere ante-chamber or outer court of the temple, beyond which more hallowed regions lay. That experience itself is the inmost sanctuary. That fellowship shines with the authentic light divine. For the soul which is united to Christ by faith is united to the living God.

## III

Our next step must be to turn our attention to the great regulative fact which is always present to Paul's mind where union with Christ is the theme—*the fact of faith*. Before union can take place, two things must happen. On the one hand, there must be an outgoing of God to man. This is the divine initiative, and its name is "Grace." On the other hand, there must be an outgoing of man to God. This is the human response, and its name is "Faith." Paul has brought the two ideas very strikingly together in a phrase which presents, in condensed form, everything that matters in redemption: "By grace are ye saved through faith."<sup>1</sup> Let us examine this fact of faith, which is the principle of union between the Christian and his Lord.

The first point to notice is that *Paul did not create the term*. He found it lying ready to his hand. In the Authorized Version of the Old Testament, it is true, the word "faith" occurs only twice; and in neither place is it a strictly accurate translation of the original.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 2<sup>8</sup>.



The song of Moses in Deuteronomy contains the words, "They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith;"<sup>1</sup> but here the idea is "lacking in fidelity." And in Habakkuk's famous declaration, "The just shall live by his faith,"<sup>2</sup> the rendering "faithfulness" would better convey the meaning. What the prophet is thinking of is the staunch and stubborn strength of character by which God's people would hold their own in face of the Chaldean menace; and it is clearly a different and deeper conception of "faith" that Paul is working with in both places where he quotes Habakkuk's words.<sup>3</sup> The term, then, is singularly rare in the Old Testament. But this, after all, is a minor matter, for the thing itself can be traced everywhere from Genesis to Malachi; as indeed the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews reminds us, in the great chapter where, with masterly insight, he has shown the red thread of faith running right through Israel's history.<sup>4</sup> Gunkel rightly warns us that if it is a *doctrine* of faith we are seeking, we shall search the Old Testament scriptures in vain.<sup>5</sup> But in the Abraham story, where a soul rises up from the dark night of heathenism and stakes everything on the troth of the one and only God; in the heroism of the prophets, choosing disaster and death rather than disobedience to the call divine; in the trust of the psalmists, reposing with childlike confidence under the shadow of a defending omnipotence; in such immortal words, shining like jewels on the finger of time, as these: "In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength,"<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 32<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 1<sup>17</sup>, Gal. 3<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Art. "Glaube," in RGG, ii. 1425.

<sup>2</sup> Hab. 2<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. 11<sup>1</sup> ff.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 30<sup>16</sup>.

and "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles"<sup>1</sup>—in all this the fact of faith emerges, preparing the way of the Lord, and making straight through the desert a highway towards the culminating hour of Calvary's hazard and glory, when faith was to cry, "It is finished." In the Old Testament, says Schultz, "faith is everywhere the foundation of salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Both word and idea are frequent in the literature of later Judaism.<sup>3</sup> There is evidence to show that the statement in Genesis about Abraham, "He believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness," which was the starting-point of one of Paul's most famous arguments, had become almost a standard text in the Rabbinic schools;<sup>4</sup> nor was speculation on the question of faith and works unknown amongst Jewish theologians. It may well have been when sitting at the feet of Gamaliel that Paul had his first introduction to the idea of faith as a technical term of religion. In the apocalyptic literature, it is sometimes difficult, as Baillie has pointed out, "to know whether it is really *faith* in its true sense that is intended, or simply *faithfulness*"; in times of persecution, such as those from which many of the apocalypses sprang, the two ideas naturally draw close together; each tends to pass over into the other, and "faith and fidelity merge into one."<sup>5</sup> Philo, who wrote among other works the *De Abrahamo* and the *De Migratione Abrahami*, gave faith a dominating place

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 40<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Old Testament Theology*, ii. 33.

<sup>3</sup> References are given by Lietzmann, on Rom. 4<sup>28</sup>, in *HBNT*, 54; D. M. Baillie, *Faith in God*, 31 ff.; Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 152 ff.; Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, 33 (*ICC*).

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 15<sup>6</sup>, Rom. 4<sup>3</sup>, Gal. 3<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> D. M. Baillie, *Faith in God*, 34.

at the heart of religion. He called it "the queen of the virtues."<sup>1</sup>

Can we define the conception, thus familiar to Jewish thought?<sup>2</sup> Apart from the subsidiary sense of "faithfulness," two meanings—a general one, and a more particular one—seem to have been present. The general idea was a *conviction of the reality of things unseen*. This was the idea which the writer to the Hebrews put into memorable words: "Faith means we are confident of what we hope for, convinced of what we do not see."<sup>3</sup> It reappears in the epistle of James: "Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well."<sup>4</sup> More particularly, faith meant a *confidence that God would fulfil His promises*. This was the root idea of the Abraham story. And from a view of faith as something directed towards the promises of God it is but a single step—a step which at many points in Jewish literature you can actually see being taken—to the idea of faith as a practical force for life, an act and attitude of self-commitment to a God worthy of all trust.

From the moment when Jesus laid His hands upon this meaning of the word and baptised it into His own message to the world, its place in Christianity was secure. "Have faith in God"—this was the burden of His appeal.<sup>5</sup> The discovery of faith in unlikely places filled His soul with joy.<sup>6</sup> Faith, even in its weakness, was a mightier power than all the forces of the world.<sup>7</sup> Given faith on the side of man, He could do all manner

<sup>1</sup> *De Abrahamo*, 268.

<sup>2</sup> For the great variety of ideas included under the term *πίστις*, see Titius, *Der Paulinismus*, 209 ff., and Weiss, *Das Urchristentum*, 322 ff.

<sup>4</sup> James 2<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 8<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 11<sup>1</sup> (Moffatt).

<sup>5</sup> Mark 11<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Matt. 17<sup>20</sup>.

of mighty works.<sup>1</sup> By evoking faith in Himself, He sought to lead men into touch with God.<sup>2</sup> He made it perfectly clear that the gate of self-abandonment was the only way into the kingdom. He challenged men to an act of full surrender. He had no place for the man who would not commit himself.<sup>3</sup> The very essence of discipleship was faith. In short, Luther's dictum "God and Faith belong together" is entirely in the spirit of the Synoptic Gospels. And even Haering's bold assertion can be allowed to stand: "God produces Faith. Nothing else? No; for faith is everything."<sup>4</sup>

It is only natural, then, that Paul, seeking for some brief, pregnant expression which would describe his soul's deepest intimacy with God in Christ, should have chosen the word faith. Whatever the subject he might be writing about, the noun *πίστις* or the verb *πιστεύειν* was sure to appear before many lines had been penned. "To him," says Principal Cairns, "faith is the great fundamental human virtue, the indispensable condition of all salvation and life and blessing."<sup>5</sup> "Faith fills the New Testament," declares Denney, "as completely as Christ does: it is the correlative of Christ wherever Christ really touches the life of men. . . . It is just as truly the whole of Christianity subjectively as Christ is the whole of it objectively."<sup>6</sup> Now a word with a religious content so extraordinarily rich is not easy to define: and Paul attempts no definition. But some of

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 9<sup>22</sup>, 15<sup>28</sup>. Contrast Matt. 13<sup>58</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 9<sup>28</sup>, 18<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 9<sup>57</sup> ff.

<sup>4</sup> *The Christian Faith*, ii. 801.

<sup>5</sup> *The Faith that Rebels*, 206.

<sup>6</sup> *The Christian Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 287 f., 291. Cf. Grafe, in *RGK*, ii. 1428: "Kern und Stern seiner gesamten Verkündigung wie seiner persönlichen Frömmigkeit ist der Glaube."

the different shades of meaning which he gives to it must be noted here.

We may set aside the passages where the idea of "faithfulness" or "fidelity" reappears. It is probable that this is the sense which the word bears in the famous catalogue of virtues that are "the fruit of the Spirit."<sup>1</sup> And "faithfulness," not "faith," is obviously the thought conveyed by the adjective πιστός, as applied to God: "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."<sup>2</sup>

Nor need we linger on the passages where Paul's usage of "faith" is simply parallel to that of Jewish religion. We saw above that, outside Christianity altogether, two ideas were frequent—the general idea of conviction of the unseen, and the more specialized idea of confidence in the promises of God. The epistles offer instances of both these usages. As illustrating the former, there is the saying "We walk by faith, not by sight";<sup>3</sup> as illustrating the latter, there is the whole of the fourth chapter of Romans, with its great picture of a man "who against hope believed in hope . . . and being not weak in faith . . . staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."<sup>4</sup> If this idea of faith as something directed towards the promises of God is less frequent in Paul than might have been expected, the reason is not far to seek. For with Abraham and with Jewish religion generally, the centre of gravity lay in the future, and hope was directed towards the fulfilment of still outstanding

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 5<sup>22</sup>. So Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*, 170.

<sup>2</sup> I Thess. 5<sup>24</sup>. Cf. I Cor. 1<sup>9</sup>, II Cor. 1<sup>18</sup>, Rom. 3<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. 5<sup>7</sup>. Cf. I Thess. 1<sup>5</sup>, II Cor. 4<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 4<sup>18</sup> ff.

prophecies; whereas Paul had definitely passed beyond the sphere of hope and promise into that of realized fact.<sup>1</sup> Hence faith was not so much a confidence that God's word would some day be fulfilled, as a recognition that it had been fulfilled already, and fulfilled in a way that claimed the surrender of a man's life in love and gratitude and obedience. "For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."<sup>2</sup>

Here we come in sight of another aspect of faith present in Paul's epistles, namely, faith as a *conviction of the Gospel facts*: "Tatsachenglauben," as Johannes Weiss denotes it.<sup>3</sup> This conception was already familiar in the primitive Christian community; and a great part of the aim of the earliest mission preaching was to prove, by personal witness and Scripture reference, the facts of Jesus' resurrection and Messiahship, and thus to win for these facts a believing assent. Paul's own Damascus preaching, immediately after his conversion, seems to have followed this line. "He preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God."<sup>4</sup> "He confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."<sup>5</sup> Among the passages in the epistles where this idea of a believing acceptance of the Gospel facts is prominent, the following may be noted: "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."<sup>6</sup> "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."<sup>7</sup> "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of

<sup>1</sup> So Weiss, *Das Urchristentum*, 323.

<sup>2</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, 324.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 9<sup>22</sup>. <sup>6</sup> I Thess. 4<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> II Cor. 1<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 9<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 10<sup>9</sup>.

God." <sup>1</sup> "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" <sup>2</sup> Paul was far too clear-sighted, however, not to recognize that the idea of faith as the acceptance of certain historic facts was one which might easily, unless very carefully handled, land the Church in serious danger. How serious the inherent danger was, the subsequent development of Catholic Christianity, with its doctrine of "implicit faith"—believing what the Church believes—was to prove.<sup>3</sup> Saving faith, on this view of it, has ceased to be the response of a man's whole nature to the God who has revealed Himself through the facts of the Gospel: it has degenerated into a mechanical assent to propositions and dogmas. Faith itself has become a "work," acquiring merit. No blame for this corrupt view can be laid at the apostle's door. For even when he speaks of faith as the acceptance of certain facts, it is abundantly clear that what is meant is no mere intellectual assent, but a radical conviction influencing decisively and for ever the trend and direction of a man's life; while as for the estimate of faith as a meritorious human achievement, any such idea is shattered once for all by Paul's great central declaration that God, and God only, is the author of salvation. The very faith which is the upward reach of man's soul comes from without, and is a gift of God. And if it be asked how that can be so, Paul's answer is that God, by revealing Himself in Christ, and in the life and death and resurrection of Christ, has shown Himself to be utterly worthy of all trust and devotion—which is equivalent to saying that God Himself is the creator and giver of faith. The human heart does not produce it:

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 10<sup>17</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Gal. 3<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps this explains why Paul, who could write scarcely a page without some reference to faith, uses only rarely the construction πιστεύειν ὅτι with a relative clause.

God bestows it. No man can be convinced of the Gospel facts in a saving way apart from the prior action of God upon his soul. Or, as Paul himself puts it, "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." <sup>1</sup>

There is another set of passages where Paul uses "faith" almost as synonymous with "Christianity." Here again he is following in the steps of the primitive community, which had begun to speak of the new religion simply as "the faith." "A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." <sup>2</sup> "Exhorting them to continue in the faith." <sup>3</sup> "So were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily." <sup>4</sup> It is in this sense that Paul is using the word when he speaks about "obedience to the faith," <sup>5</sup> when he urges the Galatians to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith," <sup>6</sup> and when he sends to the Roman Church the counsel "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." <sup>7</sup> So, too, the adherents of the new religion are sometimes in the epistles simply designated "believers" (οἱ πιστεύοντες). "You that believe," he calls the Thessalonians.<sup>8</sup> And when he tells the Corinthians that "tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not," <sup>9</sup> or when he speaks about the unbelieving husband being sanctified by the believing wife,<sup>10</sup> the distinction is virtually identical with that between "Christian" and "non-Christian." Nothing more forcibly illustrates the vital place of faith in the Gospel as Paul conceives it than the way in which he makes this word do duty for

<sup>1</sup> I Cor. 12<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 6<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Acts 14<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 16<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 1<sup>5</sup>, 16<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 6<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 14<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> I Thess. 2<sup>10, 13</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> I Cor. 14<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>10</sup> I Cor. 7<sup>12 ff.</sup>

the Christian religion as a whole. That fact alone speaks volumes for faith's pre-eminence.

Faith as a conviction of the unseen, as a confidence in the promises of God, as an acceptance of the historic facts of the Gospel, and as an epitome of the Christian religion—such are some of the different shades of meaning which the word bears in Paul's epistles. But the characteristic Pauline conception comes into view only when faith is seen as *utter self-abandonment to the God revealed in Jesus Christ*. It is faith which begets that deepest and most intimate of all personal experiences—the mystical union of the believer and his Lord.

This is the sense in which all the great passages where Paul speaks of "the faith of Christ" are to be interpreted. "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God."<sup>1</sup> "Not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ."<sup>2</sup> "A man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that the genitive here is not to be taken subjectively, as in such a phrase as "the faith of Abraham," which Paul himself uses.<sup>4</sup> Quite certainly Paul was not thinking of the faith possessed by the Jesus of history, nor of the example set by that faith for future generations. There are real grounds for Deissmann's contention that all such passages are illustrations of what should be called a "mystic genitive";<sup>5</sup> for it is the closest and most intensely personal of all life's relationships to which they refer. They are to be taken in conjunction with other passages where the apostle, speaking of faith,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. 3<sup>9</sup>; cf. Rom. 3<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 2<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 4<sup>12, 16</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, 177 f.

uses his favourite mystical expression "in Christ." "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup> "I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus . . . cease not to give thanks for you."<sup>2</sup> If we give the preposition here its due weight and value, it becomes clear that to Paul Christ is not only the object of faith, in the sense that faith directs itself towards Christ as its goal: Christ is more than that—He is the sphere in which faith lives and moves and grows and operates. Occasionally Paul uses the preposition *εἰς* instead of *ἐν*, and in such cases it might seem that the meaning is simply "believing *on* Christ," that is, being persuaded of His moral and spiritual supremacy. "Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him (*τὸ εἰς αὐτὸν πιστεῦειν*), but also to suffer for His sake."<sup>3</sup> But this does less than justice to the original. For here, as in all the other passages, what the apostle has in view is nothing less than the human spirit encountering the living God revealed in Christ, recognizing with endless wonder the holy love that has been yearning for it from the foundation of the world and has come forth to meet it, and yielding itself to that seeking and implacable love, not grudgingly nor with many a reservation and doubt, but deliberately and vehemently and for ever.

Nothing is finer in Matthew Arnold's *St. Paul and Protestantism*—a treatise which still repays study—than the description of the genesis of faith. "If ever there was a case in which the wonder-working power of attachment, in a man for whom the moral sympathies and the desire of righteousness were all-powerful, might employ itself and work its wonders,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 1<sup>15</sup> f.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 1<sup>29</sup>; cf. Gal. 2<sup>16</sup>.

it was here. Paul felt this power penetrate him; and he felt, also, how by perfectly identifying himself through it with Jesus, by appropriating Jesus, and in no other way, could he ever get the confidence and the force to do as Jesus did. He thus found a point in which the mighty world outside man, and the weak world inside him, seemed to combine for his salvation. The struggling stream of duty, which had not volume enough to bear him to his goal, was suddenly reinforced by the immense tidal wave of sympathy and emotion. To this new and potent influence Paul gave the name of *faith*.”<sup>1</sup>

It is an important point that Paul's thought of faith as the principle of union between the Christian and Christ—"the wonder-working power of attachment"—is contained in germ in the Synoptic Gospels. There we see Jesus seeking to help men towards the higher life of sanctification by binding them to Himself in love and gratitude and devotion. Even while He was with them in the flesh, the disciples had a foretaste of that blessed sense of being one with Christ which was to possess them in its fullness in the days of His exaltation; nor could Peter, James, and John have found a better summary of what their relationship to the Master meant than in such words as these—

“O to grace how great a debtor  
Daily I'm constrained to be!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter,  
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”

“Like a fetter”—so strong was the bond that held them to His person, so indissoluble and enduring the

<sup>1</sup> *St. Paul and Protestantism*, 47.

inner union of heart with heart. It is the seed of this idea, present already in the Gospel story, which bears such a golden harvest in the epistles; and the loyalty which attached the first followers to the Leader whom they loved prefigures the faith which now establishes a living union between the members of the Church on earth and their risen and exalted Head.

To Paul, who here as everywhere is building on his own personal experience, faith-union means nothing short of being overpowered by Christ.<sup>1</sup> It means the making over of the whole man—thought and feeling and will—to Christ in unconditional surrender. It means an act, and then a life. “Now is our salvation nearer,” he writes, “than when we believed”:<sup>2</sup> there is faith as an act, the original deed of self-committal by which they had become Christians. “The life which I now live, I live by faith”:<sup>3</sup> there is faith as a life, the abiding condition of the consecrated soul. Hence faith includes everything that enters into a vital personal relationship to Jesus—trusting His guidance, obeying His commandments, praying in His name, giving Him our love. The fact is sometimes commented on that Paul speaks far more frequently of “believing in Christ” than of “loving Christ”; and it has even been suggested that this makes his religion altogether colder than the religion of St. John. Such a reading of the apostle is wholly superficial. Love to Christ glows in every word he wrote. Faith, as Paul conceives it, is love: it is the utter abandonment of self which only an overpowering affection can generate. And if Paul prefers to speak of “faith in Christ” rather

<sup>1</sup> According to E. Brunner, “faith is obedience—nothing else—literally nothing else at all” (*The Mediator*, 592).

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 13<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.



than of "love to Christ," he is simply marking the fact that while loving Jesus with all the burning passion of his heart, he still recognizes that Jesus is the Lord and himself the servant.<sup>1</sup> There have been saints in Christian history who have spoken of their fellowship with Jesus almost as if the believer and the Lord entered that union on equal terms: Paul was too great and too deep a spirit to fall into that familiarity. In any case, the real language of love is not words and phrases of endearment; it does not talk much about itself; it lives in deeds of sacrifice and surrender and devotion, and in the spirit that is ready, for the beloved's sake, to suffer and be silent. And all this enters into Paul's great cardinal conception of faith, as the willing, eager obedience of the bond-slave to the Lord, and the adoring, self-abandoning response of the redeemed to the Redeemer.

## IV

The whole conception with which we have been dealing gains in vividness and precision when Paul goes on to show that it involves union with Christ *in His death and resurrection*. The exalted Saviour who takes believers into fellowship with Himself is no vague "Heavenly Being," but One who wears the very features of the Jesus who lived and died. It follows that all who are incorporated into Him by faith must in some way be identified with, and reproduce in their own spiritual history, the two overwhelming events by which He Himself passed into the power of His endless life. They must share here and now in the experiences of death and resurrection.

What, then, does it mean—to be *united with a*

<sup>1</sup> On this point, see Moffatt, *Love in the New Testament*, 160 ff.

*dying Christ*? We have seen already<sup>1</sup> how Jesus, by being born "under the law," and by taking upon Himself at the cross the full weight of the law's curse, had drawn its sting and ended its tyranny. Hence the man who was "in Christ," the man who by faith identified himself with that victorious death, could feel that for him too the curse of the law was a thing of the past. It had no hold over him any longer. "Ye also," declares Paul to the Romans, "are become dead to the law by the body of Christ."<sup>2</sup> In the same way, the bondage of the flesh was vanquished. By taking upon Himself our human flesh, which is the seat and source of sin, Christ had brought Himself deliberately into closest touch with sin in all its force and despotism; and by the death He had endured, He had settled the despot's fate and pronounced its doom for ever. Hence the man who was at one with Christ in that death could say with boldness that sin's ascendancy over him was broken. "Sin in the flesh," as a personal power, had dared to try conclusions with the Lord of glory, but it had lost its case, and at the cross God Himself had announced the evil thing's defeat. "God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."<sup>3</sup> Unite yourselves, then, with that death of Christ, says Paul, and with all that it means, and sin cannot lord it over your mortal flesh any more: "there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ."<sup>4</sup>

The *locus classicus* for all this side of the apostle's thought is to be found in Romans 6. There Paul, with magnificent vigour and effect, drives home to heart and conscience the lesson that to be united with

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 116 f.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 8<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 7<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 8<sup>1</sup>.



Jesus in His death means for the believer a complete and drastic break with sin. He pictures unregenerate human nature being nailed down on to the cross with Jesus. He begs his readers to remember that their lives must reproduce towards sin the implacable hostility which Jesus declared to it by His death. To those who, after their conversion, are still conscious of some clinging remnants of unrighteousness, his blunt, emphatic word is this: "Die to them! Christ did."<sup>1</sup> He bids them reflect on the finality of death. Does death not end all entanglements, and cut the knot of all hard problems, and bring release from all binding obligations? And can the death to sin be different? Must it not mean the utter disappearance of sin's dominion and control? "Once dead," as Paul puts it graphically, "a man is absolved from the claims of sin."<sup>2</sup> Did Jesus have to die twice? Is it not a fact that His death happened "once for all," and that henceforth He "dieth no more"? And must there not be the same finality about the experience of the man who, in union with Christ, dies to sin and all its ways? You, who at your conversion have had this great experience, says Paul in effect, live out your life on the basis of it! Realise what has happened. Tell yourselves that there is an impassable gulf—a gulf as wide and deep as death—between you and what once you were. "*Reckon yourselves to be dead unto sin.*"

Such is the trumpet-note that Romans 6 rings out; and again and again through the epistles its echoes can

<sup>1</sup> So Matthew Arnold, in the passage where he deals with what he calls "the doctrine of the *necrosis*, Paul's central doctrine." *St. Paul and Protestantism*, 51 f.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 6<sup>7</sup> (Moffatt).

be heard. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."<sup>1</sup> "If ye be dead with Christ . . . why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances?"<sup>2</sup> "We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead."<sup>3</sup> "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh."<sup>4</sup> Belief in Christ means, for Paul, "being made conformable unto His death," having "my nature transformed to die as He died,"<sup>5</sup>—a statement which reminds us that what Paul is speaking of in all these passages is no mere doctrine of *necrosis*, but the vividest of personal experiences. Here was a man who had a right to speak about union with the death of Christ. He had bought that right by a personal crucifixion. "I am crucified with Christ," he can say.<sup>6</sup> "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."<sup>7</sup> "Faith is a *suffering*," says Brunner, "comparable to the spark which flashes from the flint when struck by the steel."<sup>8</sup> If ever a man experienced the death to sin in all its pain and glory, Paul had experienced it. Hence the ringing assurance with which he bears his witness. "There is something bold, defiant, and jubilant in it," says Weinel truly. "He has not spent his life in burying that dead man who died on the road to Damascus, or in celebrating his memory with copious floods of tears. He boldly turned his back upon him once for all in order that the new life that had come to dwell in him might have room for growth and ultimate glory."<sup>9</sup> If you have died with Christ, he declares, then to sin reckon yourselves dead!

<sup>1</sup> Col. 3<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> II Cor. 5<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Gal. 5<sup>24</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> Phil. 3<sup>10</sup> (Moffatt).

<sup>6</sup> Gal. 2<sup>20</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Gal. 6<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> *St. Paul: the Man and his Work*, 97.

*Werde das was Du bist*—become what potentially you are!<sup>1</sup>

It is more than likely that this thought of union with a crucified Saviour contains the clue to an understanding of the difficult passage where Paul speaks of "filling up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ."<sup>2</sup> This phrase might indeed suggest that what Jesus endured on Calvary was only a part of the sore travail required for the redemption of the world, and that it has been left to His followers to enter into the sacrificial work thus begun and to carry it forward to completion. Doubtless a deep truth lies in this picture of the sons of God helping Jesus to bear the sins of the world; but it is not what Paul meant. Never for a moment would he allow any obscuring of his central conviction that Christ had finished the work God had given Him to do. His life and death were all-sufficient. No supplement was required. Redemption was achieved. Reconciliation was an accomplished fact. What Paul refers to as being still "lacking," or "imperfect," was not the sacrifice and suffering of Christ, but it was his own fellowship with that sacrifice and suffering. That this is the true interpretation is attested by the striking passage where he declares that the sole aim and object and ambition of his life is to know Christ better, and to enter more fully into "the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."<sup>3</sup> It is as though he said, "With Christ I have died, with Him my former self has been crucified; but every day I live I must seek to deepen my surrender, every day I would fain grow in conformity to Christ. For the ideal of complete Christ-likeness is far away beyond me still. I have not 'attained,'

<sup>1</sup> So Dodd, *Romans*, 93 (MNTC).

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 3<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 1<sup>24</sup>.

I am only 'pressing toward the mark.' There is much lacking in me yet, in many ways I still fall short of absolute identification with Christ in the death He died to sin. And what is lacking I must strive every day to fill up." In short, it is union with Christ the crucified that is here again the theme. Again the trumpet-note rings out, "Die to sin! Reckon yourselves dead."

Returning to the passage in Romans 6, we find Paul speaking, not only of "dying with Christ," but also of being "*buried with Him*";<sup>1</sup> and the introduction of this further idea is clearly meant to bring out the absolute and final nature of the break which happens at conversion. Just as the Apostles' Creed uses the phrase "crucified, dead, and buried" to emphasize the awful depth and completeness of Christ's self-sacrifice, so Paul employs the image of burial to put the reality of the death to sin beyond dispute. And he has linked up the whole conception in a wonderfully illuminating way to the Christian Sacrament of Baptism. To the convert, going down into the water, the moment of immersion was like a burying of the old self which in union with Christ he had renounced. Not that baptism created a saving relationship to Christ: only by doing violence to Paul's teaching on salvation can such a position be deduced. But baptism was the seal set to faith's reality. Once and only once could it happen in the believer's life. There could be no going back upon it. On the one side of the line of baptism lay bondage to the old lusts and a life without God in the world; on the other side of the line were joy and peace and membership in the community of Christ. Than the sacrament of baptism no more definite or decisive event could be imagined: to be baptized was to be committed publicly and for ever.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 6<sup>4</sup>; cf. Col. 2<sup>12</sup>.

And not less definite than the outward act, declares Paul, must be the inward change to which it sets its seal. "Reckon yourselves not only dead with Christ," he insists, "but *buried* with Him in baptism." For union to Jesus means an end and a beginning more absolute and clear-cut and radical than any other transformation in the world.

Beyond the reproduction in the believer's spiritual life of his Lord's death and burial lies the glorious fact of *union with Christ in His resurrection*. "Like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."<sup>1</sup> Everything that Paul associates with salvation—joy, and peace, and power, and progress, and moral victory—is gathered up in the one word he uses so constantly, "life." Only those who through Christ have entered into a vital relationship to God are really "alive." Existence outside of Christ is not worthy of the name at all; for as compared with a soul that has seen everything in heaven and earth transfigured by a personal experience of redemption and has begun to live daily in the romance and wonder and thrilling stimulus of Jesus' fellowship, the man who lives for the world and the flesh and has no knowledge of God is virtually dead. He does not know it, he thinks he is "seeing life"; he cannot guess the glory he is missing, nor realize the utter bankruptcy and wretchedness of everything in which he has put his trust. But the fact remains. "To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life."<sup>2</sup>

For this usage of the word "life," Jesus Himself had given the warrant. It appears in such sayings as "Strait

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 6<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 8<sup>6</sup>.

is the gate which leadeth unto life,"<sup>1</sup> "It is better for thee to enter into life maimed,"<sup>2</sup> "This do, and thou shalt live."<sup>3</sup> But what Paul now saw with piercing clearness was that this life into possession of which souls entered by conversion was *nothing else than the life of Christ Himself*. He shared His very being with them. "Christ, who is our life," cries the apostle.<sup>4</sup> He speaks of "the life of Jesus" being "made manifest in our body."<sup>5</sup> Over against "the law of sin and death" stands "the law of the Spirit," which "brings the life which is in Christ Jesus."<sup>6</sup> This life which flows from Christ into man is something totally different from anything experienced on the merely natural plane. It is different, not only in degree, but also in kind. It is *καὶ νέως ζωῆς*,<sup>7</sup> a new quality of life, a supernatural quality. As Paul puts it elsewhere, "There is a new creation"—not just an intensification of powers already possessed, but the sudden emergence of an entirely new and original element—"whenever a man comes to be in Christ."<sup>8</sup> He begins to live in the sphere of the post-resurrection life of Jesus. The life which he now lives bears the quality of eternity. McLeod Campbell, in his great work on the atonement, complains that "ordinary religion is so much a struggle to secure an unknown future happiness, instead of being the meditation on, and the welcoming of the present gift of eternal life."<sup>9</sup> This is Paul's glory and joy—life, with the stamp of eternity on it, a present possession! Over the believer's true inward life, death has as little power as it has over the risen and exalted Saviour. "Ye are risen with Him

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 7<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 9<sup>42</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Luke 10<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Col. 3<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> II Cor. 4<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Rom. 8<sup>2</sup> (Moffatt).

<sup>7</sup> Rom. 6<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> II. Cor. 5<sup>17</sup> (Moffatt).

<sup>9</sup> *The Nature of the Atonement*, 13.

through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead." <sup>1</sup> His life is yours, Paul means. You do not need to wait "until the day break and the shadows flee away" before beginning to live eternally. In union with Christ, that glorious privilege is yours here and now. Risen with Him, you have passed out of relation to sin, out of the hampering limitations of this present order, out of the domain of the world and the flesh, into the realm of the Spirit, and into life that is life indeed. In short, even here on the earth you are "a colony of heaven." <sup>2</sup> Never forget where your citizenship lies! "Reckon yourselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." <sup>3</sup>

It will now be apparent why we can regard the doctrine of union with Christ, not only as the mainstay of Paul's religion, but also as *the sheet-anchor of his ethics*. Critics of the apostle, from the days of the Judaizers downwards, have attacked him for the alleged antinomian tendencies of his Gospel. Their case against him might be put in some such words as these: "You preach a Gospel of free grace and unmerited forgiveness. But are you not thereby condoning sin and encouraging moral laxity? When you say that Christ is our substitute, bearing the penalty of our misdeeds so that we may go free, are you not cutting the nerve of all ethical endeavour? If every sin of man provides God with a new opportunity of showing His sovereign grace in action, may not the sinner console himself with the reflection that his evil ways are actually promoting God's glory? May he not say, 'Let us do evil, that good may come; let us

<sup>1</sup> Col. 2<sup>12</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Phil. 3<sup>20</sup> (Moffatt).

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 6<sup>11</sup>.

continue in sin, that grace may abound'?" <sup>1</sup> Paul, who was aware that such interpretations were being put upon his message, bluntly calls them calumnies; <sup>2</sup> but others besides captious critics have raised the question. It is a real difficulty. Does the Pauline evangel have a strong enough hold on the primal moral duties? Was it not a risky proceeding, to say the least of it, to eliminate the law and trust to the spirit, as the apostle did? Those who originally challenged him on the point had practical evidence to support their case: for certainly there were antinomian Christians in the early Church, people to whom the new religion was mainly an emotional excitement, a little private luxury with no real reaction on life and conduct. Very probably it was against such a group that the striking words were written, "I tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ;" <sup>3</sup> and there were members of the Christian community at Corinth who regarded participation in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper as securing for them all the blessings of salvation both here and hereafter, and thus exempting them from a too scrupulous attention to moral duty and self-discipline. <sup>4</sup> Right through Christian history the workings of this spirit can be traced; men have found it easy to shelter their sins beneath "the imputed righteousness of Christ," have used a phrase like "not under law, but under grace" <sup>5</sup> to blur the otherwise disturbing fact that God is holy and that there is such a thing as the moral stringency of Jesus, and have persuaded themselves that to an orthodoxy of creed, coupled with the cry "Lord, Lord," the gates of the Kingdom are bound to open. So the Christian faith has been

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 3<sup>8</sup>, 6<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 3<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 3<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> I Cor. 10<sup>16</sup> ff.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 6<sup>16</sup>.

## A MAN IN CHRIST

wounded in the house of its friends, and the terribly damaging divorce between religion and ethics has cast a slur on the Church's name. "Religion without morality," says Otto Kirn very forcibly, "is emptied of its true content and value. Unless the Godhead is the source and safeguard of the moral life, it is not a reality to be revered at all, but merely the object of a mythical play-acting, and the worship that men offer descends to a selfish currying of favour or to superstitious magic."<sup>1</sup> Or, in the blunter words of Bishop Barnes, "religion without morality is a curse and snare."<sup>2</sup>

Plainly, then, the antinomian charge brought against Paul is a serious one. And yet, there is one factor in the apostolic Gospel which, even alone by itself and unaided, absolutely rebuts the charge and tears every criticism of the kind to shreds. That factor is union with Christ, union in His death and resurrection.

For to be united to Christ means to be *identified with Christ's attitude to sin*. It means seeing sin with Jesus' eyes, and opposing it with something of the same passion with which Jesus at Calvary opposed it. It means an assent of the whole man to the divine judgment proclaimed upon sin at the cross. It means, as the writer to the Hebrews saw, "resistance unto blood."<sup>3</sup> It means, as Paul put it tersely, death. In face of all this, to find antinomianism in Paul is simply to caricature his Gospel.

Moreover, it follows from everything that the apostle says about redemption and the Redeemer that the man whom Christ takes into fellowship with Himself

<sup>1</sup> *Grundriss der theologischen Ethik*, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Should Such a Faith Offend?* 176.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 12<sup>4</sup>.

## MYSTICISM AND MORALITY

is from that moment *possessed of an ethical motive of the first order*. Compromises and moral second-bests can no longer satisfy him. That blessed intimacy of Christ is daily putting him on his honour. Just as Zacchaeus found that he could not possibly remain in Jesus' company nor feel happy in that new and noble society unless he took steps immediately to straighten out the tangle of his life and to make restitution to those whom he had wronged,<sup>1</sup> so the man who enters into the living union with Christ which Paul has described finds it absolutely necessary, if that relationship is to continue, to bring all his other personal relationships on to a new footing of reality and sincerity and moral truth. It was therefore to the strongest of inward motives that Paul was appealing when he wrote, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."<sup>2</sup> For, as Dr. Oman remarks, "to call Jesus Saviour is in the same breath to call Him Lord."<sup>3</sup> A great salvation begets a great love in the heart of the saved: and love's characteristic is that it would rather walk the narrow road of honour than any broad primrose path whatever. Love turns the discipline of life into romance, the cross into a shining splendour, and the cutting edge of Christ's morality into sheer glory and joy. Thus union with Christ supplies an unparalleled ethical motive.

But, declares Paul, it does more. Along with the motive, *it supplies the power*. To be "in Christ" means that Christ is the redeemed man's new environment. The human body, by the acts of eating and drinking and breathing, is continually drawing for its

<sup>1</sup> Luke 19<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 3<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> J. Oman, *Grace and Personality*, 188.

## A MAN IN CHRIST

strength upon the resources of its physical environment. So the Christian spirit, by prayer and worship and surrender, makes contact and keeps contact with its spiritual environment, which is Christ: thus the soul draws for its strength upon the supplies of power which in Christ are quite inexhaustible. "I can do all things," it says, "through Christ which strengtheneth me."<sup>1</sup> Faced with the strain and stress of the moral struggle, surrounded by stubborn hereditary foes, torn sometimes on the rack of almost unbearable temptation, it lifts its head and cries "Thanks be unto God which always causeth us to triumph in Christ."<sup>2</sup> Strange, surely, that such a Gospel, built on such an experience, should ever have been called indifferent to, or subversive of, morality! The wildest flights of parody could go no further. The fact is, the Gospel as Paul preached it holds a moral dynamic that is the one hope of the world.

It should be added, however, that the possession of this motive and this power in union with Christ *does not mean the end of the Christian's striving*. Rather is it a challenge to an effort as long as life itself. You are in Christ, Paul tells the Corinthians, but still you are only "babes in Christ."<sup>3</sup> By virtue of their conversion, they had entered the sphere of eternal life; but material things, especially the body of the flesh, still hemmed them in. Only when this body had been exchanged for the spiritual body, waiting to be revealed beyond death, would their full liberty in Christ be realized. Hence Christian life in the present must be marked by watchfulness, strenuousness, and progress. "Mortify your members which are upon the earth."<sup>4</sup> The apostle wished none of his converts to

<sup>1</sup> Phil. 4<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> II Cor. 2<sup>14</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> I Cor. 3<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Col. 3<sup>5</sup>.

## MYSTICISM AND MORALITY

regard their initiation into the Christian community as a mechanical or automatic guarantee of salvation. Any such idea would savour far more of the pagan mystery religions than of the faith of the Gospel. Paul would have said that a Christian is a man who strives, every day he lives, to make more and more real and actual and visible and convincing that which he is ideally and potentially by his union with Jesus Christ. Dr. L. P. Jacks, speaking of religion in general, has drawn attention to the striking fact that "every truth that it (religion) announces passes insensibly into a command. Its indicatives are veiled imperatives."<sup>1</sup> The Christian's standing in Christ, according to Paul, is a great and glorious fact; the man who has entered that union knows that what he is experiencing is beyond all challenge or denial—it is truth. But in the very moment of experiencing it, the truth passes over into a command. His relationship to Christ constrains him. It is a fact, but it is also a duty. It is a present reality, but also a beckoning ideal. It is a land of milk and honey, but also a desert where men go up for Christ's sake to do battle with their tempter. Its indicative is "Thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee": that is the glorious fact which nothing can shake or alter. But the indicative bears at its heart an imperative, strong, ringing, challenging: "Thy light is come. Then—arise, shine!" "Are you in Christ?" says Paul to the believer. "Then *be* a man in Christ indeed!"

One further point remains to be noticed. The experience of union with Christ, as Paul describes it, *looks beyond the present to the future*. It is a

<sup>1</sup> *The Alchemy of Thought*, 315.



blessed and glorious experience here, but it points on to something still more wonderful to come. Never in this world can the believer know all that the fellowship of Christ may mean. Even while he is "a man in Christ," he is conscious of a yearning for a deeper intimacy, of a "Christus-Sehnsucht," as Weiss expresses it.<sup>1</sup> Even while he enjoys eternal life as a present possession, he dreams of the fullness of life that will be his when the shackles of the flesh and its frailty are gone for ever. Mystics, it is often said, have no use for eschatology: they are absorbed in what they have, and are not concerned with any future consummation. That such generalizations are unwise and misleading is made plain by the experience and teaching of Paul, whose mysticism has an eschatological colouring. Titius has brought this point out well. "The Spirit is but seal and earnest of the coming glory, sonship still awaits its perfecting, even communion with Christ is still an 'absence from the Lord'; and righteousness, peace, and joy, in which the Kingdom of God consists, become downright misery, if the resurrection hope is taken away."<sup>2</sup>

Here Paul and the fourth evangelist join hands. The keynote of the Johannine literature is eternal life. This life resides in Jesus,<sup>3</sup> who communicates it to men.<sup>4</sup> "He that believeth on the Son hath"—here and now—"eternal life."<sup>5</sup> But this does not rule out the conceptions of future resurrection and judgment and glory. "No man can come to Me," says the Johannine Christ, "except the Father which hath sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."<sup>6</sup> Now accord-

<sup>1</sup> *Das Urchristentum*, 408.

<sup>3</sup> John 1<sup>st</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> John 3<sup>rd</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> *Der Paulinismus*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> John 10<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> John 6<sup>th</sup>.

ing to W. Bauer, these forward-looking passages in the fourth Gospel are a mere concession to the strength of popular ideas;<sup>1</sup> and Heitmüller regrets that the evangelist left unfinished his work of translating the traditional eschatology into wholly inward and spiritual forms;<sup>2</sup> while Bousset goes the length of ascribing all such passages to a redactor.<sup>3</sup> Explanations of this kind, however, are thoroughly unsatisfactory. It would be much nearer the truth to say that the references to the future stand where they do, not in spite of the dominant idea of eternal life in the present, but just because that idea finds in them its complement and full significance. Both Paul and John were convinced that a life so glorious as that which in Christ they already enjoyed must one day, in the mercy of Providence, break its bands asunder and leap clear from all limiting conditions whatever, and be crowned by God in heaven. For, as von Dobschütz has put it, "Christianity is—and will ever be—the religion of sure salvation, brought by Jesus and to be experienced by His believers already during their present life. This does not exclude Christian hope. On the contrary, the more present salvation is experienced in mankind, the stronger Christian hope will be."<sup>4</sup>

What we are seeking to emphasize is that eschatology does not begin where mysticism ends, nor does its presence argue a defect in the mystic's position. In point of fact, it proves the vitality and intensity of his union. It is not because he has had so little of Christ

<sup>1</sup> *Johannesevangelium*, 38 (in *HBNT*): "Spricht Joh gelegentlich von dem Gericht am jüngsten Tag, so ist das als Anpassung an die volkstümliche Anschauung zu werten."

<sup>2</sup> *Die Schriften des Neuen Testaments*, iv. 83.

<sup>3</sup> *Kyrios Christos*, 177.

<sup>4</sup> *Eschatology of the Gospels*, 205.



that he yearns for more. It is precisely because he has had so much of Christ that he is sure God intends him for the perfected experience. Hence the same man whose daily thanksgiving was that "it pleased God to reveal His Son" in him<sup>1</sup> could also hope for a day "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear."<sup>2</sup> The apostle whose faith centred in a Saviour, risen and alive and present, could also express "a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."<sup>3</sup> There is really nothing incongruous about this: vital Christianity, from the days when Jesus preached the Gospel of a Kingdom which was at once a present reality and a future hope, has always held the two positions together.<sup>4</sup> Paul knew that what had entered him, on the day of his conversion, was life of the eternal order. He possessed it: it was there. Yet Holtzmann is perfectly right when he says that "Biblical religion in general, Pauline in particular, is a *thirst* for life."<sup>5</sup> Conscious as the apostle was of Christ's real presence, not only in the sacraments but in all the joys and sorrows and vicissitudes of the common day, a presence that was an un-failing gleam of glory in his soul, he still could declare himself "willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."<sup>6</sup> When he spoke of faith, which was the outgoing of the soul towards God, and of love, which was its outgoing towards men, he also spoke—to make the trinity of religious experience complete—of hope, which was its outgoing towards the final

<sup>1</sup> Gal. 1<sup>15</sup> f.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 3<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Phil. 1<sup>23</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> It is significant that the idea of eternal life holds in the fourth Gospel and in Paul a place similar to that occupied by the idea of the Kingdom in the Synoptics.

<sup>5</sup> H. J. Holtzmann, *Neutestamentliche Theologie*, ii. 54.

<sup>6</sup> II Cor. 5<sup>8</sup>.

redemption.<sup>1</sup> A day is coming, he declares, when the union, so wonderfully established here, will be flawless and unhampered and complete, when the last clinging relic of a material world's power to dim the vision and interrupt the harmony and spoil the sanctity will be blown away on the winds of death, and when the last veil of weak mortality, hiding the ultimate mystery, will be rent in twain by God's own hands from top to bottom. Then indeed, out of the cataclysm of that hour, there will arise a soul "in Christ"! "So shall we ever be with the Lord."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Scott has drawn attention to the frequency with which Paul brings the three attitudes together. See *Colossians*, 15 (*MNTC*).

<sup>2</sup> I Thess. 4<sup>17</sup>.